

I started as a practicing engineer in the summer of 2021, when remote work had been an established reality for many in the structural engineering profession for over a year. I remember speaking with my peers and fellow graduates about how they had hardly met anyone they worked with in person, how there was no assurance of returning to an office environment, and how they felt a lack of community as they were foisted upon adulthood and into their careers. I shared many of these fears, and understood the unique challenge of cultivating a network and community in a time when we could not physically meet with others. My supervisor introduced me to the Structural Engineering Association, which in many ways became the community that I sought. I learned of a SEAoNY site visit event from my supervisor and was encouraged to attend with him. The event was informational, well organized. Beyond that, it gave me the opportunity to interact with fellow structural engineers of various levels and ask questions and share knowledge throughout the site visit. The sense of community within my profession that I felt during this event is what ultimately inspired me to become involved in SEAoNY. Speaking from my experience as a young practicing engineer, to engage students and graduates in SEA, different components and members need to work together towards recruitment. Companies and schools can encourage participation in SEA, the events and involvement need to be easily accessible to young professionals, and involved young members can play an active role in the recruitment of other engineers within their own networks.

A young engineer's first outlet within the structural engineering community is often the company where we launch our careers. As such, these outlets are our primary sources of information and networking opportunities, lending them the ability to expose us to additional external resources available to us. Working with institutions and companies to motivate interest and involvement in SEA can be an effective way to recruit younger engineers. For example, my experience getting involved in SEAoNY was directly influenced by a current member of my company. By hearing more about the program and attending an event that was open to non-members I was able to take action to become more involved. Many young engineers have a journey similar to mine, where they have felt the need for a community in our industry, but may not have all the information to know where to find it. For SEA, this can be as simple as advertising events to institutions or companies, providing free or non-member opportunities focused on recruitment, or disseminating information on the goals and benefits of being in SEA to younger engineers. Through these methods, younger engineers will gain another outlet to begin building their professional communities and to become more involved in their networks.

In a time where we are now accustomed to working remotely, information is more accessible than ever and can be used to promote involvement. Many of the SEA webinars and conferences have online platforms now, which allow anyone to participate. This accessibility allows flexibility in how we reach out to students and recent graduates, and can be utilized to interact with these audiences directly. For example, offering webinars catered to students, where a speaker can discuss a topic relevant to the students' academic interests and explain SEA and how they can become involved. This catered informational session can give students direct exposure

to SEA and encourage them to both ask questions and learn more, as well as incite them to become involved, knowing the benefits and opportunities offered by SEA. By working with professors and student chapters and providing these groups access into SEA, both SEA and academic institutions can promote involvement. Accessibility is key to encouraging both students and graduates to join. By promoting and holding these events for the benefit of students, they will understand opportunities available to SEA members, and be motivated to join with their peers.

These last two strategies involve coordination with an audience that is not yet involved, but there are also opportunities available within the existing members of SEA to recruit younger engineers. As noted earlier, younger engineers understand the importance of building a network in the industry. In my own experience, after joining the publications committee at SEAoNY, I realized the benefits of being involved and wanted to share with my peers. I personally reached out to my graduate class alumni to explain my involvement in the committee and the necessity of volunteers, and to act as a guide if anyone wanted more information. Within our own network of peers and co-workers, we can provide the necessary engagement to recruit members. It is not solely the responsibility of committee chairs and organized events to recruit members, it is also up to members to reach out to a colleague and say, "I'm involved in this great community of engineers where I have a voice and opportunity to learn within my profession, and I think you could benefit as well. Let me know if you want to be involved and I can show you how." A simple, yet personal gesture motivates a strong interconnected community of structural engineers.

The younger generation of structural engineers will lead and develop the new built environment, and therefore it is essential that they have the knowledge and community support to encourage their growth for the benefit of all. Thus, it is critical to inform young engineers about the resources and network available to them and inspire involvement. This can be done through coordination with schools and companies to provide resources to become involved or to learn more about SEA. Either broader or more personalized events that are accessible to key audience sectors can be coordinated with these institutions to provide an effective system of communication between students and SEA. The information provided will trickle down and younger members can share this information within their own established communities of young engineers. To facilitate these strategies SEA must interact directly with professors, students, and current professionals to provide opportunities to learn more and communicate the importance of SEA. Through these efforts, all members of SEA will benefit from a growing community of engineers that will lead the future.